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RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC//USDP:PDUSDP/ISA:EUR/ISA:NESA// IMMEDIATE
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RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK IMMEDIATE
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE IMMEDIATE
RHMFISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL IMMEDIATE
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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 ANKARA 004355

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NOFORN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/28/2026

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SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR PKK TRILATERAL MEETINGS: THE
TURKISH WISH-LIST

REF: A. BAGHDAD 2628

[1](#)B. BAGHDAD 2655

Classified By: Ambassador Wilson for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

[1](#)1. (S/NF) Recent pledges by Presidents Bush and Talabani have assured the Turks that we and Iraq take the PKK seriously, and may have averted -- temporarily -- a Turkish cross-border operation. Should the Iraqis follow through on their commitments, this will begin to satisfy long-standing Turkish demands. A successful senior-level trilateral meeting will consolidate these gains, publicly demonstrate U.S. and Iraqi will to act decisively, and substantively improve Turkey's relationship with Iraq and the U.S. End summary.

Cross-Border Operation Averted, For Now

[1](#)2. (S/NF) Turks, both in government and out, appear reassured by senior U.S. and Iraqi commitments to take immediate steps to inhibit the PKK's freedom of action in Iraq. A Turkish cross-border operation (CBO) is still on the table, but it appears that Turkey is waiting to see if these commitments bear fruit (and may also be waiting for the outcome of the Supreme Military Council's selection of the new CHOD in early August). Some senior civilian and military officials of the GOT (including PM Erdogan) are proceeding with scheduled summer leave. We have bought some time, but another serious incident of PKK violence will raise the specter of unilateral Turkish action again.

Trust But Verify

[1](#)3. (S/NF) We will need to evaluate whether Talabani has been able to deliver on the steps he has outlined for us and the Turkish Embassy in Baghdad (reftels). A key player is Barzani, who has generally taken a negative stance toward Turkey (and Turkey toward him), even as Turkish companies invest heavily in KDP-controlled areas. If indeed the GOI and KRG take decisive action and sustain the effort, the GOT will gratefully accept this demonstration of U.S. and Iraqi will. More important, such a demonstration will significantly reduce public pressure for a CBO, ensuring that Iraq's sovereignty is respected, and its stability not threatened from the north.

¶4. (S/NF) Even with these steps PKK violence in Turkey will not magically disappear. In addition to their northern Iraq strongholds, PKK terrorists are already in Turkey and planning attacks. Even if the PKK leadership called for a cessation of terrorism, we suspect violence would continue for some time. Indeed, the PKK may seek to derail the trilateral process by stepping up attacks in Turkey. We must prevail upon the GOT to educate the Turkish press and people on this point.

Status of Long-Standing Turkish Requests

¶5. (S/NF) GOT demands for U.S./Iraqi action against the PKK in Iraq have changed over time. In the early phases of OIF, Turkey fully expected Coalition Forces to destroy the PKK's presence there once and for all (despite Turkey denying us the northern option in March 2003). When it became clear that the insurgency was a significant threat to Iraq everywhere except in the north -- where the PKK operates and also where the KDP and PUK ensure stability -- Turkish officials eventually understood that concerted kinetic coalition action was not likely. They have continued to press for other action, however, not only to degrade the PKK's capabilities but also to demonstrate America's will to stand by its NATO Ally. Informed Turks know the U.S. cannot defeat the PKK, but they do expect us to help. They also understand that, if the PKK is successfully blunted in northern Iraq, Turkey will be forced to focus on fixing the underlying problems at home that still give life to this insurgency (we will discuss this septel).

¶6. (S/NF) During September 2005 talks with EUCOM CDR Gen Jones and then-CENTCOM D/CDR Gen. Smith, CHOD GEN Ozkok identified a series of steps the GOT would want the U.S. and/or the Iraqis to take. While we have asked the GOT for an update urgently for these talks, we believe this list remains more or less definitive. We comment on the status of each step:

-- Pressure the Kurds, especially the KDP, to cut off their contact with, encouragement and support of the PKK and to struggle against the terrorists. (COMMENT: We defer to Baghdad on the issue of whether the Iraqi Kurds actively support the PKK, but we surmise they tolerate their presence, profit from it in a business sense, and do not prevent their infiltration into Turkey. Recent Embassy Baghdad reporting indicates that President Talabani intends to clamp down on this and that KRG President Barzani has agreed.)

-- Take steps to stop the PKK's political activities that inflame public opinion in Turkey (e.g., close front offices, prevent their fronts from participating in the Iraqi political process). (COMMENT: Per Baghdad reporting, Talabani has pledged to do this and PM Maliki has agreed.)

-- Apprehend and hand over PKK leaders. (COMMENT: Per Baghdad reporting, Talabani is considering this. This would be difficult and require risky peshmerga action, and we understand this would be politically very difficult for the KRG. ISF and/or CF assistance may be necessary.)

-- Cut the PKK freedom of movement and logistics lines. (COMMENT: Recent Baghdad reporting suggests that Talabani will consider this if PKK attacks in Turkey continue.)

-- Prevent criminal activity that funds the PKK. (COMMENT: We do not know if Iraqi Kurdish officials benefit from PKK smuggling activities (we understand that the PKK's smuggling networks may actually compete with the KDP's). We understand the PKK derives significant income from smuggling and other criminal activities in Iraq, Turkey, and Europe.)

-- Close Makhmour refugee camp. (COMMENT: We understand from Baghdad reporting that Talabani does not wish to pursue this now. While Makhmour has been the focus of considerable USG and UNHCR attention, it is at the end of the day less important to Turkey than cutting off PKK infiltration,

arresting leaders, or closing offices.)

-- Get the word out to the U.S. media that the PKK does not represent Kurds, but is a terrorist organization that uses IEDs that kill indiscriminately ("are a crime against humanity"). (COMMENT: U.S. leaders have consistently condemned the PKK. We assess that "PKK romanticism" is more of a problem in Europe than in the U.S.)

-- Provide real-time intelligence. (COMMENT: We provide significant, real-time, actionable intelligence on PKK activities in Turkey to the GOT, as well as regular exchanges on PKK activities in Europe and in Iraq.)

-- Facilitate coordination between border units on both sides of the border (but the Iraqi side should not be only Kurdish units). (COMMENT: Task Force-Band of Brothers LNO to Turkish Special Forces in Northern Iraq has successfully begun coordination between IBP units and Turkish SF, but this is a nascent effort. We assume IBP units that serve on the Turkish border will be Kurdish, but that does not preclude cooperation.)

-- Consider training Iraqi Border Patrol personnel in Turkey. (COMMENT: We should coordinate and encourage this.)

What Can the Trilats Achieve?

¶7. (S/NF) Two previous trilateral meetings on the PKK (held in January and August 2005, at the Deputy Assistant Secretary level) have produced scant results. In her April 2006 visit to Turkey, Secretary Rice pledged to redouble U.S. efforts on the PKK and to hold another trilateral meeting after the formation of the Iraqi Government. Very recent events have given this process renewed momentum.

¶8. (S/NF) The trilats present an excellent opportunity for the three governments to come together at a senior level to consolidate recent gains, publicly demonstrate the resolve of the U.S. and Iraq to take further decisive measures, and use the momentum not only to deal with the PKK issue but to solidify Turkey-Iraq (and Turkey-KRG) ties. If Turkish officials really believe the GOI and KRG are serious about this issue (and they remain skeptical), we will then need to steer the conversation to a more robust Iraq-Turkey discussion on follow-up. Such follow-up could include, for example, final agreement on the modalities of extradition.

¶9. (S/NF) Turkey still has grave concerns about many issues in Iraq (the threat of dissolution, Kirkuk), but real progress on the PKK issue will provide the GOT more public space to maneuver and make more concrete contributions to the future of a new Iraq. It should also silence the saber-rattling.

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WILSON